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The Very Idea! Teaching Information Literacy in the Liberal Arts Environment

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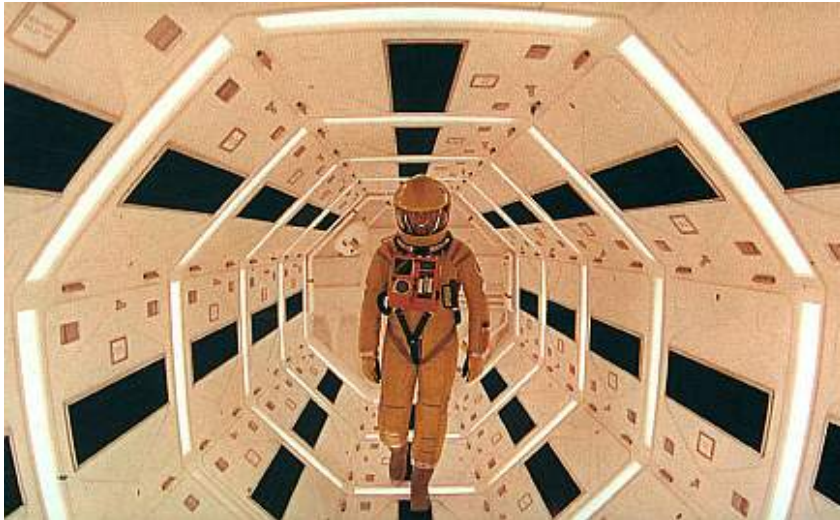
THE VERY IDEA!

**TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE
LIBERAL ARTS ENVIRONMENT**

**Jason Ezell & Philip Smith
Lincoln Memorial University**


Q: WHAT NATURAL APPEAL MIGHT INFO
LIT POSSESS? POSSIBLY THAT OF ...

Science Fiction?



Mystery?





WHAT KINDS OF “APPEAL” ARE
WE OFTEN MORE APT TO USE?

...

ANXIETY AND OBLIGATION

Info Overload!!!

Plagiarism: It's a Crime!



Standard One

The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

Performance Indicators:

1. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Confers with instructors and participates in class discussions, peer workgroups, and electronic discussions to identify a research topic, or other information need
- b. Develops a thesis statement and formulates questions based on the information need
- c. Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic
- d. Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus
- e. Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need
- f. Recognizes that existing information can be combined with original thought, experimentation, and/or analysis to produce new information


2. The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

Outcomes Include:

- a. Knows how information is formally and informally produced, organized, and disseminated
- b. Recognizes that knowledge can be organized into disciplines that influence the way information is accessed

Q: Is it possible that we have become professionally conditioned to think of information literacy in terms of checklists, outlines, and skills sets?

Q: Does that conditioning influence how we design our curricula and draft our lesson plans?





WHAT ELSE MIGHT INFO LIT BE?

*Our Pedagogical Philosophy/Goals for First-Year Info
Lit Instruction ...*

BEYOND THE COGNITIVE ...

“... *The Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, a set of curricular guidelines and program planning guideposts, is heavily focused on the purely cognitive aspects of information retrieval, evaluation, management, and ethics, with occasional glances at **valuing or affective elements**. Many librarians, faculty, and their colleagues in the academy are **searching for a more comprehensive framework for information literacy**.”

-- Craig Gibson, *Student Engagement and Information Literacy*



AS A LIBERAL ART ...

“Information and computer literacy, in the conventional sense, are functionally valuable technical skills. But information literacy should in fact be conceived more broadly as a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to **critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact ...**”

Shapiro & Hughes, “Information Literacy as a Liberal Art”



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IS KEY

To ...

- Provide the students with more natural motivations
- Lay a foundation for later, more advanced, skills-based instruction
- Create more lasting bonds between the students and academic culture





THE ACRL STANDARDS

Certain parts of the standards already emphasize concepts that may form the basis for ILI as a liberal art.

STANDARD ONE (INFORMATION NEED)

- From **Performance Indicator #2**: The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.
 - Knows how information is formally and informally produced, organized, and disseminated
 - Recognizes that knowledge can be organized into disciplines that influence the way information is accessed
 - Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats (e.g., multimedia, database, website, data set, audio/visual, book)
 - Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources (e.g., popular vs. scholarly, current vs. historical)



STANDARD FIVE (ECONOMIC, LEGAL, AND SOCIAL ISSUES)

- From **Performance Indicator #1**: The information literate student understands many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology.
 - Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security in both the print and electronic environments
 - Identifies and discusses issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information
 - Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech
 - Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material





THE INFO LIT PROGRAM AT LMU

Year One



HOW WE HAPPENED ON THIS APPROACH ...

- Quality Enhancement Plan → 5-year, tiered integration of IL instruction into certain courses
- Year One: ENGL 110
- ENGL 110 → No full research component → Final assignment is a “response paper”

Q: How do you teach information literacy when research is not required?



THE PLAN FOR ENGL 110

○ Discuss *concepts*

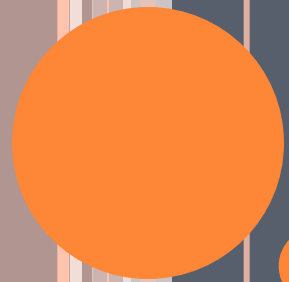
• Unit One: *Information Origins*

- *The Name of the Rose*
- “Networks and Hierarchies” from *Glut*
- Information (R)Evolution
- Middle Ages Tech Support
- “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”
 - Excerpt from *2001: A Space Odyssey*

• Unit Two: *Information Ethics*

- “What Do Schoolteachers and Sumo Wrestlers Have in Common” from *Freakonomics*
- “Why Steven Ambrose is a Vampire”





SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ...



HOW DO WE ENGAGE STUDENTS WITH THESE CONCEPTS?

Possible Approach	Example Question	Example Text
The Science Fiction angle	How will the culture of info change our future?	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>
The Mystery angle	How is the researcher like a detective?	<i>The Name of the Rose</i>
Personality Inventory angle	Am I <i>really</i> Net Gen?	“Is Google Making Us Stupid?” etc.
Everyday Info Practices angle	Does my cell phone use alter my relationship to info?	



HOW DO WE ENGAGE STUDENTS WITH THESE CONCEPTS? II

Possible Approach	Example Question	Example Text
The Natural World angle	Is creating, collecting, and sharing info <i>natural</i> ?	<i>Glut</i>
You Make the Decision angle	What plagiarism policy would <i>you</i> create?	<i>Freakonomics</i>
Academy as Culture angle	What values and incentives do universities uphold concerning ideas?	<i>Freakonomics</i>



PROGRAM STRATEGIES

- Target courses such as
 - 1st-year seminars with heavy discussion components
 - Composition courses which have fundamental research units
- Build relationships with those course instructors
 - Find out what concepts their students need more exposure to
 - Keep records of those needs
- Create short units based on those concepts
 - Make available to all faculty
 - Be prepared to use electronic discussion forums (discussion boards, blogs)
- Propose multidisciplinary elective courses



Questions?

COMING FULL CIRCLE

